

Xperience Annex Evaluation – Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Xperience Annex (“the Annex”) is support and referral services for youth aged 18-29 in Hamilton, Ontario. The Annex focuses primarily on education and employment, but also offers support and referrals around housing, mental or physical health, or other issues that may present barriers to longer-term employment. It has been open as a pilot project since June 2016, funded by the Province of Ontario’s Local Poverty Reduction Fund. This evaluation examines the degree to which the Annex achieved its two primary goals to 1) improve outcomes for youth, including in education and employment, but also in participants’ setting and achieving their own goals; and 2) lead as a model of youth-centered service integration.

To answer these questions, data from the following sources was analyzed: program usage data (provided by frontline staff); data from the Employment Readiness Scale (completed by 63 participants); 138 interviews with participants (63), community partners (55), and staff (20); and one-time participant satisfaction (199 participants).

With respect to outcomes for youth participants, over the course of its 2 and a half years of operation, the Annex served 795 participants, many of whom faced significant challenges at various levels. Most participants were satisfied with the support they received from the Annex and would recommend it to a friend, and the accessible, informal, flexible, and welcoming environment was seen by all stakeholder groups as having a positive impact on youth and their ability build their self-efficacy. Most participants (68%) made progress on their goals (an indication of self-efficacy) with contributions from the Annex. Participants showed improvements in some but not all elements of Employment Readiness.

With respect to leading as a model of youth-centered service integration, the Annex also demonstrated some positive outcomes. Partners generally indicated improvements in factors such as trust, collaboration, information-sharing, and service integration because of the Annex’s work, however there was less of a sense of transparency between partners than other elements of change among community partners. Partners were concerned about the 6-month contracts for Youth Engagers and the sustainability of the Annex. Many also felt less connected to the Annex’s work over time. Several initiatives launched in partnership with the Annex were also seen as significant positive outcomes, including the Hamilton Health Sciences-delivered mental health training workshops for frontline workers, the Hamilton Youth in Construction program, and McMaster University’s posting for a position focused exclusively on improving access to students who face barriers to post-secondary education. The Annex is generally seen a strong partner that acts as a hub and connector between youth, institutions, and service providers supporting youth.

The report concludes with some recommendations for strengthening the program and for policymakers to address broader challenges. Program-level recommendations centre around developing a communications strategy, clarifying strategic directions, exploring funding opportunities to re-instate the Youth Engager role (currently not funded), and examining the domains of the Employment Readiness Scale in which participants did not improve.

Overall, the Annex is well-positioned to continue to strengthen youth service integration in Hamilton.

1. Introduction

This report presents the background, methods, findings, and recommendations from a nearly two-year effort to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of the Xperience Annex. To introduce the initiative and frame the evaluation, this section describes the elements of the Xperience Annex program model (Navigation, Youth Engagers, Service Provider Collaboration, and Curriculum), and concludes by presenting the questions guiding the evaluation.

1.1 *The Xperience Annex Model*

1.1.1 Navigation

The Xperience Annex (referred to as the Annex throughout this report) offers support and referral services for youth aged 18-29 in Hamilton, Ontario. The initial vision for the Annex was as an employment hub to help lift youth out of poverty and into full-time, sustainable, living wage employment. In practice the Annex focuses primarily on education and employment, but also offers support and referrals around housing, mental or physical health, or other issues that may present barriers to longer-term employment. The model was developed through extensive consultations with youth and community partners after youth employment and education emerged as a significant theme among neighbourhood action plans as part of the City and Hamilton Community Foundation's Neighbourhood Action Strategy (NAS). The Xperience Annex opened its doors to the public on June 13, 2016.

The office is located in a cubicle office on the fourth floor of the Central branch of the Hamilton Public Library in downtown Hamilton and is staffed by the Youth Navigator. Office hours vary but are generally weekdays, plus one Saturday each month¹. Participants who meet with the Navigator do not need an appointment. No one is turned away, even if they are outside of the age catchment for the program.

Although the Annex is open to everyone, many participants accessing the service are typically experiencing marginalization because of low-income status, involvement with child welfare systems, incidence of mental health challenges, and other issues. Further, although the target age for the intervention is 18-29, no one is turned away, so that a portion of participants fall outside this catchment at ages both below and above this range.

¹ Since their doors opened in June of 2016, the Annex has experimented with various hours of operation, including some evenings until 8 p.m. and alternating Saturdays. These have been refined to the current schedule based on volume of participants accessing the service at various times.

1.1.2 Youth Engagers

Complementing the Youth Navigator are Youth Engagers, peers who engage youth in the library where the Annex is located, at community events, and at various locations throughout the city in order to connect them with the Navigator to access support. Although the initial plan for the Annex had been to have a single Full-time equivalent (FTE) Youth Animator to support the Navigator, consultations with partners and youth in the development phase of the initiative highlighted the value of peer support and engagement. The Senior Project Manager partnered with a local Employment Ontario service provider to have the positions partially supported by the Youth Jobs Connect Program. The Annex supplemented the program's funding so the positions offered a living wage. Part of the vision for the Youth Engager role was that as youth themselves, the Engagers would have opportunities to develop professional skills and relationships that would be of benefit in their longer-term aspirations.

Youth Engagers have typically been hired in groups of 4, and have typically been in their roles with the Annex for 6-month periods. The rationale for this length of contract is that it offers opportunities to a greater number of youth, and is a step on their paths towards education or employment to avoid relying on social assistance.

1.1.3 Service Provider Collaboration

The Annex has also made efforts to bring youth-serving service provider partners together through various tables and committees. Initially the Annex had a Partnership Table at which managers and directors from a range of community organizations and institutions met twice annually, a Youth Steering Committee of youth and frontline service providers that met monthly, and three sub-committees (focused on Education and Employment, Housing, and Mental Health) that met approximately quarterly. Over time the benefit of the sub-committee and Partnership Table meetings became less clear, given the presence of several other collaborative groups in the community that bring service providers together, and so these groups stopped meeting through the Annex's structures. The Youth Steering Committee (YSC) format was also adjusted and began having youth only (plus adult allies of Annex staff) for most meetings, and bringing service provider partners together with the youth every 3 to 4 months.

1.1.4 Curriculum

A final element of the model has been offering employment-related curriculum and educational opportunities directly to youth, which the Annex has done in partnership with various partners including the City of Hamilton Public Works and Public Health Departments, Mohawk College City School, Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation, Threshold School of Building, Prince's Charities, McMaster Centre for Continuing Education, LiUNA (Laborers' International Union of North America), and the HAND (Hamilton and District Heavy Construction) Association. These include:

- Welding course
- Web design course
- Hamilton Youth in Construction program
- City Housing Hamilton Improvement Program
- Cyber Seniors (intergenerational project)
- Construction Engineering Technician course
- Hamilton Health Sciences' Dietetic Interns nutrition workshops

In addition to these initiatives, a unique partnership between the Annex and Hamilton Health Sciences resulted in the development and provision of day-long workshops for frontline workers in any agency who interact with youth experiencing mental health crises or challenges. The workshops sought to give service provider attendees a basic understanding of youth mental health and some foundational skills in interacting with and supporting youth with mental health challenges. These mental health capacity building workshops were delivered in the spring and fall of 2017 and 2018. Hamilton Health Sciences has now made a commitment to delivering these workshops twice annually moving forward. Based on workshop participant feedback, the next workshop will also include a segment on self-care for frontline workers.²

These initiatives are not core to the Annex model, but they were created to develop relationships between service providers and institutions and build on shared objectives to be of benefit to youth in the community. This component of the Annex's work aims to support the three other elements (Navigation, Peer Engagement, and Service Provider collaboration) by strengthening connections between organizations, ideally making the system of services more easily navigable for participants and Annex staff in a supportive role.

1.2 Evaluation Questions

This evaluation looks primarily at the extent to which the program theory (or logic model) was achieved. Beyond that framework, we also consider unanticipated outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations for the future of the Xperience Annex.

The key question guiding this evaluation is:

To what extent has the Xperience Annex achieved its two ultimate goals, which are:

1. To improve outcomes for youth. This includes changes in education and employment outcomes, to be sure, but also outcomes along a continuum of self-efficacy: Are participants' basic needs met? Are they setting goals and making progress towards those goals? If so, to what extent is the Annex playing a role in that progress?

² Although the evaluator summarized participant evaluations for the Annex and Hamilton Health Sciences, these workshops are out of the scope of this evaluation and are not included in this report.

2. To lead as a model of youth-centered service integration. Examining sustainability and flexibility within the model are extensions of this evaluation question.

In addition to this central evaluation question, several sub-questions were also developed in consultation with staff:

- Who is accessing support from the Annex?
- How satisfied are participants with support received from the Annex?
- What lessons were learned about the Annex and supports needed?
- How attributable are observed changes to Annex participation?
- What unanticipated outcomes have emerged?

2. Methods and Limitations

In order to answer the evaluation questions presented above (see Section 1.2) the evaluation used the following methods to collect and analyze data. This section begins by briefly describing the program logic model (Section 2.2), which forms the basis for the evaluation. Following this, the three data collection methods are described: The Employment Readiness Scale (ERS, Section 2.2); interviews with participants, community partners, and program staff (Section 2.3); and one-time participant satisfaction (Section 2.4). The section concludes with a discussion of limitations to the methods used (Section 2.5).

2.1 Logic Model and Program Data

The foundation of this evaluation is a logic model, which was developed through facilitated sessions with Annex staff (see Appendix A). The logic model is a document that reflects the inputs and activities of the intervention, and the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes that are expected to result from those activities. The outcomes described in the logic model form the basis of the topics, indicators, and questions used to guide data collection. Some elements of the logic model are out of the scope of this evaluation.

Basic participant usage data (number of participants, visits, and demographics of participants) were collected by the Youth Navigator and provided to the evaluator.

2.2 Employment Readiness Scale (ERS)

The Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) is an internationally validated tool to measure change in participants' likelihood to secure and maintain employment³. The ERS consists of an online multiple-choice survey, completed by participants independently with staff on-hand to offer support if needed. The tool uses a framework of four employability factors, five soft skills, and three scales of challenges⁴. These are presented in Table 1 below. The ERS is "currently the only known standardized and outcome validated measure of employment readiness."⁵

³ <http://www.employmentreadiness.info/home>

⁴ For a summary of research on the Employment Readiness Scale see:

http://www.employmentreadiness.info/sites/employmentreadiness.info/files/files/Organizations/ERS%20Research%20Results_cdn.pdf

⁵ Ward, V. 2016, p.1. Summary of Research on the Employment Readiness Scale™. Accessed at:

http://www.employmentreadiness.info/sites/employmentreadiness.info/files/files/Organizations/ERS%20Research%20Results_cdn.pdf

Table 1 - Employment Readiness Scale Factors⁶

Employability Factors		Definitions
<i>What prepares a person to manage their work life</i>	Career Decision-Making	Knowing what type of work suits you
	Skills Enhancement	Having the skills for the work you want
	Job Search	Having the skills to find work
	Ongoing Career Management	Being able to manage future work life changes
Soft Skills <i>What helps a person to manage challenges and perform effectively in their work life</i>		
	Self-Efficacy	A sense of being able to perform well
	Outcome Expectancy	Whether or not you expect to succeed and are willing to take responsibility for creating that success
	Social Supports	Your network and ability to get help
	Work History	Your feeling that you have performed well in previous contexts (paid or unpaid)
Job Maintenance	Having the skills to keep work once found	
Challenges <i>What kinds of challenges can get in the way of being ready for employment</i>	Personal	Challenges you can address yourself
	Environmental	Challenges you can manage with help
	Systemic	Challenges that have to be addressed on a community basis

Based on how participants score in these three areas (Employability Factors, Soft Skills, and Challenges), they are classified into three levels of employment readiness, which are defined in the following ways:

1. **"Not Ready"** - less than a 40% chance of becoming successfully employed, with a high likelihood of not retaining employment.⁷
2. **"Minimally Ready"** - a 60% chance of becoming successfully employed in 12 weeks, but with a high likelihood of not retaining employment

⁶ Excerpted from Model Description on the ERS Agency website: www.employmentreadiness.org

⁷ <https://www.employmentreadiness.org/secure/agency/erslevels.cfm?wp=en&CFID=&CFTOKEN=>

3. **"Fully Ready"** - a 80% chance of becoming successfully employed in 12 weeks, with a high likelihood of remaining employed

Data from Xperience Annex participants was also summarized in comparison with provincial data using the same tool (courtesy of Dr. Dorothy Riddle, one the tool's developers) to contextualize findings. Highlights from this comparative data are summarized in this report.

2.3 Interviews

To complement the ERS data, 138 interviews were conducted with participants, community partners, and staff. All interviews were conducted and transcribed near-verbatim by the evaluator in real time. Transcripts were then coded for themes using Dedoose mixed methods analysis software.

Participants

63 interviews were conducted with 48 participants. From this group, 13 participants returned for follow-up interviews, with two participants returning for a third follow-up interview. Follow-up interviews took place 6 to 9 months after the first interview. Participants were contacted initially by phone or email by the Youth Engagers or the evaluator, and provided with a \$20 grocery store gift card and two adult bus tickets in recognition of their time and contribution to the study. Interviews were mostly scheduled, though drop-in hours on the 4th floor of the Hamilton Public Library, Central Branch (where the Annex is located) were also set to accommodate participants for whom appointment times were challenging. Participant interviews typically lasted 20 to 30 minutes. The interviews consisted of reviewing a consent statement, administering the Employment Readiness Scale (ERS – see above), and posing a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions about the participants' experience with the Annex and any outcomes attributable to support received there. (See Appendix B for all interview guides).

In a facilitated session with youth engagers in May of 2017, the most significant indicator of success was self-efficacy, that is, participants setting goals and achieving them. Thus, all participants were asked what their main goal was when they first attended the Xperience Annex, how they felt they were doing towards achieving that goal, and how helpful the Annex was in achieving that progress. These responses were coded into the categories presented in Table 2 (following page); examples are provided for illustration.

Table 2 - Examples of "Progress on Goal" category responses

Progress on goal	Example(s)
No change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking employment, no change in employment status
Some progress, not from Annex support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking FT employment; found PT employment on their own not in their chosen field
Some progress from Annex support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear goal at the outset, Annex support helps participant establish a goal and next steps Goal identified; taking steps to deal with barrier to achieving goal with Annex support
Significant progress, not from Annex support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured full-time employment on their own
Significant progress from Annex support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured full-time, stable employment or are in education with Annex support

Partners

55 interviews were conducted with 41 participants representing 21 organizations and/or City of Hamilton divisions. Of these, 14 partners were interviewed a second time, between 6 and 12 months later. The first period of interviews with partners was from August to December, 2017; the second was from May to October, 2018. Partners were contacted by the evaluator in person or by email, and interviews were conducted primarily in-person at locations convenient to the partners, such as their offices or coffee shops. Follow-up interviews were conducted primarily by phone. Interviews typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Several partners who were interviewed initially expressed having less connection to the Annex and so felt they were not well positioned to offer insight into the evaluation of the program and declined to be interviewed. At the same time, some partners were more recently connected with the Annex through various initiatives and so agreed to be interviewed for the first time in the latter round of partner interviews.

At the outset of the evaluation, Annex partners met in one or more of three sub-committees (Employment and Education, Mental Health, and Housing), a larger partnership table (primarily for community partner leadership), and a Youth Steering Committee, which met monthly. Through the course of the project, this structure changed and only the Youth Steering Committee continued to meet, though with an altered structure wherein youth and staff met monthly, while community partners were invited to attend meetings every 3 to 4 months. To adapt the evaluation to this change in structure and context, interview questions were posed to partners in relation to their partnership with the Xperience Annex more broadly, rather than tying responses to specific committees.

Quantitative questions asked partners to indicate the best-fit response to a series of statements. The first asked how often partners felt the Youth Steering Committee agendas were driven by youth (Never; Seldom; Some of the time; or Most of the time). The remaining statements required partners to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement, which again had corresponding numerical values (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Undecided; Agree; or Strongly Agree). The percentage of responses for each answer option were calculated for each question, and for each round of interviews.

Staff

20 interviews were conducted with 16 staff, 4 of whom participated in follow-up interviews in the Fall of 2018. Of the staff members interviewed, 12 were youth engagers, who were typically interviewed towards the end of their contracts in order to have more experience on which to draw for the interviews. Staff interviews typically lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted in person.

2.4 One-time participant satisfaction

Beginning November 1, 2017, the Youth Navigator provided each participant who came into the Annex office one poker chip for them to place in one of two buckets hanging outside the Annex office (and out of view of the Navigator). Above the two buckets was a sign that said, “Based on your experience today, would you recommend the Annex to a friend?” Each bucket had its own label: one said “Yes,” the other, “No,” in answer to the posted question. In total 191 chips were placed in the two buckets between November 2016 and October 6, 2018. Some loss of data quality may have resulted from the navigator not giving a poker chip to every participant who came to the office.

2.5 Limitations

Some limitations of this study must be named here. Sample size limits the representativeness of findings, particularly with respect to participants. Reaching participants particularly for follow-up interviews was particularly challenging, with many contact numbers being no longer in service, or participants declining to take part in interviews. Still, the number of participant interviews sufficient to meet the needs of this evaluation because saturation in terms of themes among responses to interview questions was reached. This limits the quality of the data for identifying change in outcomes for participants. The difficulty in reaching marginalized youth is typical for working with this population, as they may be experiencing multiple forms of precarity (e.g. housing, employment, mental health).

Participant completion of the Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) was also limited by delays in the Annex obtaining tablets on which participants could take the survey until mid-2017, shortening the period in which the instrument could be used and therefore limiting the potential sample size somewhat.

Some details may have been lost in the near-verbatim transcription, though this was mitigated by asking interviewees to slow down their speech when necessary, or reading back sections of the transcript to interviewees to check that their intended meaning was captured.

The effective dissolution of the sub-committees and partnership table required some changes to the partner interview guide. Specifically, questions that had been linked to sub-committees and partnership table were asked of all partners and framed as being in consideration of partnership with the Annex in general. Partners interviewees opted in or out of questions based on their assessment of relevance and their ability to speak to a given aspect of the Annex’s work. Thus, not all partners answered all questions and the number of respondents varied by question.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Context and Demographics

Some important contextual elements were identified by all stakeholders, which are worth laying out here as conditions surrounding the Annex and those who access it. In particular, stakeholders talked about:

- Rapidly rising housing prices in Hamilton
- Growing precarious employment
- Widespread mental health challenges among youth
- The complexity of social and health service systems
- Competition for clients among service providers in response to a competitive funding environment

Within this context, and over the course of its two and a half years of operation at the time of writing, the Annex has served a total of 795 individuals (see Table 3 below). Total unique participants grew significantly from 2016 (in which the Annex was only open half the year) to 2017. The number of total 2018 unique users was slightly lower than in 2017, but it was also reported before the end of the year and is on track to meet or exceed the number of total unique participants from the previous year. Although the majority of participants accessing the Annex do fall within the target age range of 18-29, the number of individual participants who are outside of that target has been growing over time. Of the 328 participants who came to the Annex in 2018, 180 (55%) of them fell within the target age range, and the remaining 148 (45%) were outside of the range. Staff noted that some of the out-of-catchment participants had been within the target age range when they first accessed the Annex and aged out, maintaining contact with the initiative after they turn 30.

Table 3 - Unique Annex Users by Year

2016 Unique participants	195
2017 Unique participants	359
2018 Unique participants	328
Cumulative unique participants	795

Table 4, below, shows a summary of the demographics of participant visits of the Annex (not individuals). Here we see that a wide range of participants from various barriered groups access the Annex, and overall more male-identified participants access the Annex than female-identified.

Table 4 - Demographics of Annex Participants 2016-2018

Year	Jan.1- Nov.6, 2018	2017	2016
Female 1 parent family	37	41	6
First Nations	62	59	23
Homeless or at risk	219	351	159
Low income	558	666	365
Military	6	3	0
Racialized	248	194	79
Persons with disabilities	397	564	306
Mental health	276	426	236
Physical health	191	349	181
Single parent	25	27	16
Unemployed	471	450	223
OW/ODSP	327	491	244
Aged out of CAS	66	43	54
Singles age 46-64	94	135	37
Newcomer	28	8	0
Male identified	493	588	337
Female identified	287	320	195
Total participant accesses	780	908	532

Another lens for examining the starting points of Annex participants is provided by data from the ERS, as seen in Table 5 below. Over two-thirds of participants (64%) who completed the ERS faced systemic challenges, which are not easily addressed by an individual participant with support, but rather require community or higher-level changes. More than 4 out of every 5 participants (83%) completing the ERS faced personal challenges, which can typically be addressed individually. A slightly smaller majority (79%) faced environmental challenges, which can often be managed with supports. Overall, fully 94% of participants completing the ERS faced a combination of personal, environmental, and systemic challenges. This reinforces the relatively high degree of challenges faced by the population of participants accessing the Annex.

Table 5 - Participant Challenges based on ERS

Participants experiencing challenges	
Personal challenges	83 %
Environmental challenges	79 %
Systemic challenges	64 %
<i>Total Participants Experiencing Challenges</i>	94 %

In the context of these challenges, more than three-quarters (77%) of Annex participants who completed the ERS are “Not Ready,” meaning they have less than a 40% chance of securing employment, and low chances of not maintaining employment if secured. Provincially, the rate of participants who are “Not Ready” is 66% “Not Ready” (D. Riddle, supplemental report). Among those who are “Not Ready” at the Annex, the challenges they report most commonly are :

- 64% Finding affordable housing
- 60% Having health/emotional problems
- 57% Having enough education
- 53% Often feeling like a failure
- 51% Having enough money

Compared with Ontario-wide ERS data shared with the evaluator courtesy of Dr. Dorothy Riddle, Annex participants are somewhat more likely to need help with Job Maintenance, which suggests that securing employment may be less of a challenge for Annex participants than maintaining employment once it is secured. Annex participants were also less likely to need help with Outcome expectancy and Social supports than participants across the province overall, suggesting they may have reasonable expectations of their success and know where to access support. Annex participants who completed the ERS were similar to the provincial average in terms of needing support with the four Employability Factors.

3.2 Participant satisfaction

Of the 191 poker chips placed within the two buckets at the Annex office, 189 chips (99% of the total chips) were placed in the “Yes” bucket, and the remaining 2 chips (1%) were placed in the “No” bucket. Thus, the overwhelming majority of participants who placed chips in the buckets would recommend the Xperience Annex to a friend based on the experience they had on the day they were given chips. This represents an overwhelming majority of participants who were willing to endorse the program to friends.

Participant interviewees were also asked about their level of satisfaction with the support they received from the Annex. Three-quarters (75%) of respondents were very satisfied; 16% were somewhat

satisfied; the remaining 10% of respondents were Neutral (see Table 5, below). No participants indicated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the support they received.

Table 6 - Participant Interviewee Satisfaction

Participant Satisfaction (Interviews)	%	Count
Neutral	10%	6
Somewhat Satisfied	16%	10
Very Satisfied	75%	47
Total	100% ⁸	63

Most participants who were somewhat or very satisfied said they felt that way because of the Navigator’s open, approachable style and flexibility. Access to bus tickets was also seen as particularly helpful for many participants. Participants who were neutral in terms of satisfaction also had positive interpersonal experiences with the Navigator and appreciated his style of working, but were primarily not satisfied because of lack of progress on employment goals.

3.3 Participant Outcomes

This section discusses findings from participant completion of the ERS and participant interviews in order to assess the degree to which the Annex achieved its goal of including outcomes for youth.

3.3.1 ERS Outcomes

Table 7 - Participant Change in Employability Factors and Soft Skills

	Pre	Post	% Change
Clients who are self-sufficient already			
Career Decision-Making	36%	43%	7%
Skills Enhancement	57%	57%	0%
Job Search	21%	43%	22%
Ongoing Career Management	29%	50%	21%
Clients who are strong on Soft Skills already			
Self-Efficacy	29%	43%	14%
Outcome Expectancy	79%	64%	-15%
Social Supports	64%	57%	-7%
Work History	36%	50%	14%
Job Maintenance	50%	50%	0%

⁸ These percentages total 101% because of rounding conventions.

As shown in Table 7 above, Annex participants made significant gains in the Employability Factors of Job Search (22% increase) and Ongoing Career Management (21% increase), suggesting that respondents were better equipped with the skills to look for employment and manage future changes in their work life after accessing support through the Annex. The increases in these employability factors are comparable to those found in the Ontario-wide ERS data⁹; however, the Ontario data also showed significant improvement (10% or greater) in Career Decision-Making and Skills Enhancement, which were not matched in results from Annex participants.

In terms of Soft Skills, participants showed improvements in Self-Efficacy and Work History (a 14% increase in each), pointing to improved self-perceptions of their ability to perform well and that they have performed well in volunteer or paid positions in the past. These changes may reflect participants' changed perceptions of the same experiences, or may reflect changes in their perceptions based on new experiences since they first completed the ERS. Outcome Expectancy decreased significantly (by 15%), suggesting that participants had more negative expectations of their ability to succeed and/or the degree of responsibility they feel able to take for that success over time, though it is not possible to draw out which of these elements is a stronger factor given the limitations of the tool. There was no or limited change in Career Decision-Making, Skills Enhancement, Social Supports, and Job Maintenance. As with the Employability Factors, Ontario-wide ERS data on Soft Skills showed significant improvement (between 10 and 20%) in all five soft skills, whereas Annex data showed improvements on par with these findings only in the skills of Self-Efficacy and Work History, and considerably weaker results in the remaining three soft skills.

These results are decidedly mixed, and suggest both strengths in the support the Annex offers and some areas that the initiative may want to consider for further development depending on the relative importance of employment readiness for the program moving forward. While the Annex was initially seen as an employment hub, experience operating the program has shown that youth participants' expectations are varied. A key lesson learned from operating the Annex is that some youth need to attend to other issues in their lives before they are ready to seek employment, and that there is a wide range of next steps for youth in moving forward on a path towards achieving their immediate and long-term goals.

⁹ Riddle, D.I. (2018). Building Employment Readiness – Hamilton NAS ERS Data, October 2018. Provided to Annex staff and the evaluator courtesy of Dr. Dorothy Riddle.

3.3.2 Participant Interviews Findings

Table 6 - Participant Progress on Goals

Progress on Goal	%
No change	17%
Some progress, not from Annex support	8%
Some progress from Annex support	46%
Significant progress, not from Annex support	5%
Significant progress from Annex support	24%
Total	100%

Of the participants interviewed, 68% described some progress or significant progress towards their goals that the Xperience Annex helped with. A further 13% of participant interviewees described some progress or significant progress that they did not attribute to the support they received from the Xperience Annex. The remaining 17% of participant interviewees described no change in terms of progress towards the goals they identified when first coming to the Xperience Annex.

In some cases, progress or success will be securing employment or beginning an educational program. However, success is understood here more broadly as well to include any positive movement towards participants achieving their own goals. Because the Annex aims to meet participants where they are and support them in making positive progress on a range of goals, which can include education and employment, support often involves the pre-employment issues such as health or housing. Interviewees of all descriptions spoke of the following specific barriers to education or employment (from most to least frequently):

- Health challenges (physical and mental)
- Affordable housing
- Transportation
- Child care
- Cost of education
- Lack of Canadian employment experience

3.4 Model effectiveness and learnings

This section presents and discusses findings from interviews with community partners, staff, and participants to assess the degree to which the Annex’s secondary objective - to lead as a model of youth-centered service integration - was achieved.

3.4.1 Partner assessments of impacts to service system

Partners were read a series of statements about the Annex and its impact, and then asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed. Key findings are highlighted in this section. See Appendix C for the full results.

- When asked how often they felt **Youth Steering Committee meeting agendas were driven by youth**, most partners said “Some of the time” (38%) in the first round of interviews, and “Most of the time” (66%) in the second round of interviews. This is reflective of the greater emphasis on youth leadership within this committee, including meeting without adult service providers at times, over the course of the program pilot.
- Most partners agreed that **understanding** had grown between partners connected to the Annex: 55% said Agree in the first round of interviews which grew to 66% in the second. With a moderate decrease in the proportion of partners who strongly agreed, this suggests that partners perceived greater or more noticeable growth in understanding in the earlier phases of their partnership with the Annex.
- From the first to the second round of interviews, partners conveyed a stronger sense that **trust** had grown between partners at the **Youth Steering Committee**, from 66% to 87% Agree or Strongly Agree.
- Partners felt that **collaboration** had grown between partners connected with the Annex, with 87% of respondents saying Agree or Strongly agree initially, and 100% of responses in the second round being in these two categories.
- When asked whether they felt that youth gained **opportunities to network with employers** by attending the Youth Steering Committee meetings, partners in the first round mostly said “Disagree” (38%). The second-round responses to this question were more mixed, being split evenly between “Disagree,” “Undecided,” or “Strongly Agree.”
- Half of partner respondents indicated that their organizations were **co-funding projects** with the Annex in round one, while 20% said they were in the second round. Despite this decrease, that there were some projects co-funded between organizations in partnership with the Annex is viewed as a success.
- Most partners in round one (58%) said they Agreed that partnership with the Annex had increased **collaboration among partners**. In the second round, 60% of partners said they Strongly Agreed this was the case, suggesting that became stronger over time.
- Similarly, half of partners in round one (50%) agreed that **information sharing** had increased through partnership with the Annex, while in round two 53% said they strongly agreed with this.
- In both rounds of interviews, most partners felt that partnership with the Annex contributed to **breaking down silos** (68%, and 53%, respectively). The proportion of partners saying they Strongly Agreed with this grew from 11% to 33% between the two rounds, suggesting a stronger sense of this occurring over time.

- When considering partnership with the Annex in general (which more partners responded to than the earlier question regarding trust at the Youth Steering Committee), partner agreement with the idea that **trust** had grown weakened somewhat between rounds: Initially 79% of partners Agreed or Strongly Agreed with this, and 67% did so in the second round. This may be connected to a sense of less connection to the Annex as partners convened less through committee meetings over the course of the program.
- When considering whether **transparency** between partners had grown because of the Annex, most partners were Undecided (68% in round one and 60% in round two). This does not convey a strong sense of transparency between partners, although the proportion of respondents who Agreed or Strongly Agreed grew from 33% to 40% between rounds, a modest but notable shift.
- Partners were asked whether they felt that **gaps in service** were identified through partnership with the Annex, and most Agreed that this was the case (68% in round one, 47% in round two). The proportion of respondents who Strongly Agreed grew from 14% to 40% between rounds, a significant change suggesting that this was seen as a strength in the Annex's work.
- Respondents generally agreed that partners **collaborated to fill identified gaps** (75% saying Agree or Strongly Agree in round one, and 73% saying so in round two). The proportion of those who Strongly Agreed grew moderately from 19% to 33% between rounds.
- Those who agreed that partnership with the Annex **raised their awareness of issues facing youth** grew from 76% to 86% between rounds, suggesting that the Annex had an impact in this regard for some partners.
- When asked whether an **integrated model of service delivery for youth was discussed** through partnership with Annex, partners in round one most often said they were Undecided (46%). In round two, however, 73% Agreed that this was the case, and a further 13% Strongly Agreed. This represents a significant shift in perception that service integration was discussed over the course of the initiative.
- When asked whether the kind of **integrated service model** considered above was being **developed**, partners conveyed a mixed sense: in round one 40% Disagreed and another 40% were Undecided; round two showed Undecided as the most common response (33%), while the proportion of those who Agreed had grown by 7% and those who Strongly Agreed went from 0 to 20% of responses. Overall, this suggests that the sense that such a model got stronger but was not strong.
- Lastly, partners gave a stronger sense that **service integration had increased** through partnership with the Annex over time: most respondents in round one (57%) Agreed and none Strongly Agreed, while in round two 33% Agreed and 27% Strongly Agreed.

3.4.2 Location

Participants who talked about the Annex's location did so positively, saying it is convenient and accessible. Partners were also generally positive in their assessments of the Annex's location in the Central library. It was seen as central and accessible, and had the potentially youth-drawing advantage of being located near the library's Makerspace and digital sound and video studios.

On the other hand, partners also expressed concerns about the location, particularly around the limited privacy and confidentiality offered by the Annex cubicle, which has no roof. The space was also seen as limited in terms of the potential for more services to co-locate. Some partners expressed concerns that the space is not very visible and suggested that a street-level or storefront location would improve visibility and possibly potential for co-location. Others also felt that the number of youths typically look for supports at the library would be limited.

3.4.3 Staff Learnings and Outcomes

Overall, staff members described a strong sense of connection to their team members, particularly the Navigator and Project Manager:

"They're the best people to facilitate something like this. They have the adult professionalism and experience, but this unique special teenage flame in them that keeps the youth engaged. Makes it easier for a youth engager to step into the role. You can quote me on that one."

– Youth Engager

Youth Engagers generally felt supported in both work and in personal matters, and the dynamics among the staff team encouraged open and honest discussion of ideas and challenges. At times interpersonal conflicts lessened the sense of connectedness, but these were often addressed and working relationships repaired. City support staff from public health, housing, and addictions who have been connected to various degrees with the Annex were seen as less connected than the rest of the staff team, though still offering useful supports and having open dialogue with colleagues.

As issues arose, they were typically brought to the Senior Project Manager, or to the weekly Annex team meeting, where they would be discussed openly and solutions generated. A culture of openness to all input and encouragement of identifying challenges frankly allowed staff to feel comfortable contributing to these discussions. When needed, issues would be addressed through private discussions with the supervising staff.

Staff were given a range of training opportunities on topics including youth engagement, city strategies, anti-racism and anti-oppression, LGBTQ2SIA+¹⁰ inclusion, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and facilitation. Most staff members also attended the youth mental health training provided in partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences.

¹⁰ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, 2-Spirit, Intersex, Asexual

Staff members described increasing capacity in terms of confidence, time management, facilitation, public speaking, networking, leadership, writing, listening, event planning, project management, research, and soft skills such as keeping a regular work schedule. Reflecting on capacity they had built through the role, one Youth Engager said:

“My communication skills, both frontline as well as email. Just my confidence in myself. My knowledge of community resources. My knowledge of City of Hamilton’s initiatives and strategies... [and] I’m definitely better at facilitating”

-Youth Engager

On a collective level, staff talked about increasing capacity to delegate tasks within the team, more effective communication, and developing organizational skills.

Some staff practices were changed over the course of the pilot. Referral forms were adjusted slightly, and some staff members described meeting less often and meetings having a more relaxed atmosphere over time. A more significant change was the introduction of social media (Instagram and Twitter) accounts for the Annex in an effort to be more accessible to youth. Outreach materials were also increasingly designed by Youth Engagers both in terms of content, adding more detail about the broad range of issues that the Annex could offer support with, and graphic design. Another practice that changed was that when follow-up contact with a participant was required the engagers began taking on the task rather than the Navigator, as in past. The Public Health nurse connected with the Annex noted a significant increase in participants connecting with him after signage about his services and hours was posted. Finally, engagement and outreach locations and strategies were discussed and revised repeatedly in consultation with the Youth Engagers.

3.4.4 Gaps

Participants identified some challenges that the Annex was not able to offer them support around. Among these were:

- Employment beyond short-term contracts
- Employment that accommodates children’s school schedules
- Affordable housing
- Insufficient income to meet basic needs and remove barriers to employment
- Recognition of non-Canadian professional credentials

While these challenges are all out of the scope of control of the Annex, it is important for the Annex as a system connector to be aware of these challenges and explore opportunities to work with partners to address them collectively.

3.4.5 Unexpected Outcomes and Concerns

In follow-up interviews, partners were asked to reflect on any elements of the Annex as it developed through the pilot phase that they did not expect (framed as “surprises”). Partners were also asked to describe any concerns they had about the Annex. Findings from these questions are discussed here.

Partners described a wide variety of unexpected outcomes; among the responses, three themes were discussed by more than one partner. First, partners did not anticipate some of the unique initiatives launched by the Annex in partnership with other organizations, including the mental health workshops (with Hamilton Health Sciences) and the Hamilton Youth in Construction program (with LiUNA). The high demand for the mental health workshops in particular was unexpected for some. The workshops were seen as immensely helpful in developing capacity among frontline workers in a range of services to have basic tools and approaches to better support youth facing mental health challenges. Second, several partners did not expect that the Annex could accomplish so much with a relatively small staff team. Third, some partners were surprised that, at the time of the interviews, the Annex had not yet secured sustainable funding. The program has since been incorporated into the Healthy and Safe Communities Department of the City of Hamilton.

The most commonly described concerns among partners were clearly sustainability of the Annex as a whole, and drawbacks of having relatively short Youth Engager contracts. Given that the Xperience Annex has now been integrated into the City of Hamilton’s Healthy and Safe Communities Department as a permanent service, partners can rest assured that the core functions of the Annex can continue. At the same time, the current arrangement does not include funding for Youth Engagers, seen as crucial to the program’s innovation and success. Staff continue to investigate potential funding sources for the Youth Engager role.

Many partners also raised concerns about the length of contracts for Youth Engagers, stating that the duration made it difficult to build relationships and trust with community partners and youth, as well as limiting the potential personal and professional growth of the engagers themselves. The Youth Engagers were widely viewed as significant assets to the program because they can connect with youth at a peer level. Some partners suggested increasing the level of engagement out in community from the Youth Engagers.

Other concerns raised by more than one partner interviewee include:

- The small capacity of the Annex and vulnerability if staff move to other positions
- Risk of duplication and need for better coordination given multiple tables concerning youth issues in Hamilton
- The separation of youth from service provider partners at the Youth Steering Committee meetings

This last concern was also reflected by partners as many of them feeling generally out of touch with the Annex and its work. Many partners expressed disappointment that minutes from Youth Steering Committee meetings were not circulated, and also more broadly expressed a desire to hear more from the Annex about its work.

3.4.6 Xperience Annex Role in the System of Services for Youth

As partners described how the Annex fits in the system of services for youth, the most common theme by far was as a connector and navigator to other services that can support youth in meeting their goals. Several partners described it as being at the centre of services for youth as a point of entry or hub from which youth are directed outwards to appropriate supports. It is seen as a good starting point with limited resources and staff. In the words of one partner:

“It’s like sticky tack... that kind of connectivity... that shifts and creates other connections as the needs of the youth evolve.” - Partner

Another partner framed the Annex as being important for pre- and post- program support, as a “go-between.” Some partners described the Annex has a kind of one-stop shop for services, though acknowledged that it was in the early developmental stages of this kind of model given the limited number of other services that are co-located. Still, the flexibility in terms of type and scale of situation that Annex staff can support youth around was seen as a tremendous asset in the system of services for youth, particularly when many services for youth are inflexible due to mandates from upper levels of government. Some partners suggested it would be helpful to define the Annex’s role more clearly as either a service connector or a service provider, but not both. Its role as a service connector emerged as a clear theme across partners interviews. The low-barrier environment and accessibility were also seen as strong assets for connecting youth to supports. Some partners described these elements as being crucial to giving youth hope for their futures. As another partner put it:

“The Annex offers that safe space and that connectivity in a non-threatening way – they’re not seen as government. That’s their biggest advantage.” – Partner

Despite this observation that the Annex is not seen as a government-delivered service, partners noted significant strength in having the Annex as City-operated service because it protects it from shorter funding cycles and changing funding priorities that many non-profit services must navigate to sustain their organizations. Further, being housed organizationally in the City of Hamilton was seen as important because it provides opportunities for connecting more easily to policymakers, leveraging the learnings from youth to the influence the systems in which youth face barriers. Partners also felt the Annex was leading by example by involving youth to offer input and insight at every stage and meeting with partners. The connection between the frontline interactions with youth and these policy levels was seen as crucial to the Annex’s success and ability to make positive change.

The final role for the Annex described by partners was as a convener of community partners to improve coordination between service providers and institutions locally. Previous efforts at bringing youth-serving partners together to enhance collaboration were referred to by many partners, and the Annex was viewed by some as a much more successful effort than these .

3.4.7 Suggestions from Stakeholders

Participants offered the following suggestions for how the Annex could improve its service (in order of frequency):

1. More advertising communicating more details about the range of supports available and success stories
2. Better/more visible signage
3. More locations
4. More consistent hours, and clearer communication about when staff will not be in the office
5. More flexible hours (outside of regular business hours) for greater accessibility
6. More staff like the current Navigator
7. More private office arrangement
8. More ways to communicate with staff besides in-person
9. More Youth Engagers reaching out to youth in ethno-cultural associations and in Children's Aid and Catholic Children's Aid Societies
10. More engagement with businesses (job development)
11. Mentorship programming
12. More follow-up with participants
13. Stronger web presence (website) with more links
14. Programming offering wage-subsidized work experience
15. Life skills courses

Most or all of these suggestions would require an increase in funding and staff. As opportunities for increased funding or partnerships that could increase staff capacity arise, the Annex may wish to consider these suggestions in order to better meet participants' needs.

Partners' suggestions fell primarily under four main themes: communication, clear committee structures, capacity and outreach, and coordination.

Many partners expressed a desire for more communication from the Annex about its work. Specifically, partners suggested greater advertising to the public, posting on social media about where engagers would be engaging, giving information sessions to partner organizations, and communicating about the strategic directions the Annex is moving in.

Since the data collection period for the evaluation closed, placement students with the Annex have developed a quarterly newsletter for community partners. The Annex's social media accounts are on hiatus as there is no staff to take this on at present.

Partners also suggested greater clarity (and communication of that clarity) around committee structures and purposes to enhance collaboration between partners. Many partners also asked for minutes from committee meetings to be made available so that they could be aware of discussions and progress at meetings they are unable to attend.

Increasing capacity and outreach of the Annex emerged as a third theme among partner suggestions. Partners felt that youth in other areas, such as the mountain, could benefit from other locations of the Annex. Expanding both service navigation and the complement of Youth Engagers were also common suggestions. Some partners also suggested having staff (the Navigator or Youth Engagers) walk people

to services they are being referred to. Some partners acknowledged the limitations to capacity of funding, but there was broad consensus that the Annex style of service was worth expanding upon. Another suggestion offered by some partners was to explore the possibility of using or creating a mobile app that youth could use to access the Annex and the supports to which it is connected. Further, one community partner has proposed organizing an event at which service users and app developers work together to develop an app to improve service users' experiences and outcomes.

Coordination, while seen as an important role for the Annex, was also described as an area for further strengthening. For some partners this means increasing service co-location to strengthen the "one-stop shop" dimension of the initiative. Several partners also suggested a stronger connection between the Annex and the Youth Wellness Centre.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Having presented findings from a range of data collection methods, this section will summarize key findings, and offer some conclusions and recommendations for next steps for the Annex.

To review, the central questions guiding this evaluation are:

To what extent has the Xperience Annex achieved its two ultimate goals, which are:

- 1. To improve outcomes for youth. We're looking for changes in education and employment, of course, but also for outcomes along a continuum of self-efficacy: are participants' basic needs met? Are they setting goals and making progress towards those goals? To what extent is the Annex playing a role in that progress?*
- 2. To what extent is the Annex leading as a model of youth-centered service integration? Examining sustainability and flexibility within the model are extensions of this evaluation question.*

4.1 Key Findings and Conclusions

Key findings drawn from the data presented in Section 3 above are summarized here in an effort to address the key evaluation question components.

Key Findings – Outcomes for Youth:

1. The Annex served a significant number of participants - 795 over 2.5 years - facing a significant number and degree of challenges at the personal, environmental, and systemic levels. While the Annex does not have the power to address many of these challenges, it can leverage its role as a convener of service providers and institutions in an effort to collectively address some of the challenges facing youth in Hamilton.
2. Most participants were satisfied with the support they received from the Annex and would recommend it to a friend.
3. The accessible, informal, flexible, and welcoming environment was seen by all stakeholder groups as having a positive impact on youth and their ability build their self-efficacy.
4. Most participants (68%) made progress on their goals (an indication of self-efficacy) with contributions from the Annex.
5. Participants showed some improvements in Employment Readiness, generally equal to changes among service users taking the ERS across Ontario. Some elements, such as Skills Enhancement, Outcome Expectancy, Social Supports and Job Maintenance, did not show improvements comparable with Ontario-wide data.

Key Findings – Model Learnings

1. Partners generally indicated improvements in factors such as trust, collaboration, information-sharing, and service integration because of the Annex’s work, however there was less of a sense of transparency between partners than other elements of change among community partners.
2. Partners also indicated that an integrated model of service delivery for youth was being discussed and beginning to develop.
3. Staff generally had positive experiences, felt connected to one another, had access to training opportunities and gained capacity.
4. Partners were concerned about the 6-month contracts for Youth Engagers and the sustainability of the Annex. Many also felt less connected to the Annex’s work over time.
5. Hamilton Health Sciences-delivered mental health training workshops for frontline workers were seen as a significant positive outcome of the Annex’s work in partnership in the community.
6. The Hamilton Youth in Construction program was also seen as a positive unexpected outcome from the Annex.
7. McMaster University’s posting for a position focused exclusively on improving access to students who face barriers to post-secondary education is a significant impact that is a direct impact of the Annex’s work, and in particular of the practice of bringing the voice of Youth Engagers to the forefront to speak to their experience.
8. Partners and participants made a range of suggestions to improve the Annex’s service, many of which centered around higher-cost expansion of staff and/or programming, and lower-cost communications improvements.
9. The Annex is generally seen a strong partner that acts as a hub and connector between youth, institutions, and service providers supporting youth.

In the two-and-a-half-year pilot phase, outcomes for youth from the Annex are positive and moderate. The Annex also demonstrated positive outcomes from the model it developed, and was seen as improving service integration overall, though there is always room for improvement in that domain. Given the many structural challenges Annex participants face, including rising housing prices, growing precarious employment, and widespread mental health concerns among youth, the impacts from the Annex are very promising. It is well-positioned to continue to strengthen youth service integration in Hamilton.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Program Recommendations

Based on these findings, this evaluation offers the following recommendations:

Program Recommendation 1: The Annex should develop a communications strategy to share the replicable practices it has found most effective. Such a strategy could also include enhancing public

communications and exploring the possibility of partnering with an existing mobile app provider or developing an app.

Program Recommendation 2: Stepping further into its role as convener and connector, the Annex should clarify its strategic directions for the future, including partner engagement and committee structure, and communicate clearly and often with partners on how best to move towards greater service integration.

Program Recommendation 3: The Annex should continue to explore opportunities for funding to re-instate the Youth Engager role, and consider longer contracts to provide more time for Engagers to develop relationships and trust with youth and community partners.

Program Recommendation 4: The Annex should examine the domains in the ERS in which participants did not improve in order to better support them in being ready for employment.

4.2.2 System and Policy Recommendations

The outcomes achieved by the Annex given the constraints of the program and the scope of challenges faced by participants are significant. Still, even greater outcomes would be likely if some of the broader issues faced by participants and the system of services were addressed. As such, the following policy recommendations are offered to the province of Ontario and its representatives within the context of the Local Poverty Reduction Fund and the goal of poverty reduction in general.

Policy Recommendation 1: The funding models for social services could be adjusted to encourage greater service integration and system navigability. Until services are not in competition with one another for numbers of participants, deeper collaboration, transparency, and integration will be hindered.

Policy Recommendation 2: Some elements of the model used by the Xperience Annex might be taken up by service providers supporting groups besides youth. In particular, the ability to build a relationship with a known, public-facing individual, the flexibility of being able to drop-in without an appointment and without having to navigate other bureaucratic hurdles all contribute to a more comfortable and client-centered environment.

Policy Recommendation 3: At a broader level, the greatest impacts for youth accessing the Annex could be achieved by addressing the underlying factors that lead youth and others to strive towards stability and well-being in a context of precarity. Specifically, greater income security, more affordable housing, and lower cost post-secondary education would all have more significant impacts on poverty than any one social service is able to achieve.

2.5 3 sub-committee meetings (mental health, housing, ed. & empl.)	3.5 sign-in sheet; agenda; minutes; action plan(s)	4.5.1 ID gaps within issue areas 4.5.2 collaborate w/ experts to fill gaps 4.5.3 raise awareness of issues facing youth 4.5.4 discussing service integration	5.5 Increased service integration	
2.6 Presentations to frontline staff (local)	3.6.1 calendar of sessions; referrals linked to spreadsheet	4.6.1 ↑ awareness & referrals to Annex 4.6.2 improved relationships w/ frontline staff 4.6.3 ↓ partner caseloads	5.6.1 Trust ↑ 5.6.2 Partner caseload ↓ 5.6.3 Awareness ↑ 5.6.4 Partner staff more empowered 5.6.5 Improved relationships with partners 5.6.6 Fewer silos 5.6.7 Refined Annex processes from partners	
2.7 Presentations to other municipalities (regional)	3.7 agenda; calendar	4.7.1 improved relationships with counterparts 4.7.2 lessons learned to improve practice 4.7.3 ↑ awareness of Annex, connections	5.7 Awards (OMSSA)	
2.8 fund and advise on curriculum development	3.8 budget; invoice; calendar; exit survey; sign-in sheet; curriculum docs	4.8.1 improved opportunities for youth (targeted, more and broader, relevant, youth-driven) 4.8.2 more access points to education	5.8.1 Fear of post-secondary ed. ↓ 5.8.2 Attendance at post-secondary 5.8.3 Employment 5.8.4 Improved outreach strategies (effectiveness)	
2.9 refer out to agencies (& give feedback)	3.9 logged in spreadsheet, tally ↑	4.9.1 youth access service 4.9.2 connected and aware of opp's in ed., empl. (link to 4.1) 4.9.3 goal setting (youth) 4.9.4 negative feedback welcomed	5.9.1 youth establish and work towards goals (e.g. apply for OSAP, education) + all outcomes from 5.1	
2.10 Weekly Annex staff team meetings	3.10 agendas; calendar; minutes could happen	4.10.1 connected team 4.10.2 issues flagged 4.10.3 problems solved 4.10.4 training opportunities	5.10.1 increased capacity (individual and collective) 5.10.2 Issue resolution 5.10.3 refined	

				processes	
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Rationale:

- Youth face barriers/challenges to education and employment.
- Parents and grandparents living with youth identified this as a priority across all 11 NAS neighbourhoods

Appendix B – Interview Guides

Initial Interview Guide for Annex Participants

1. When did you first come to the Annex?
 - a. How often do you come here? (About how many times have you been here?)
2. What brought you here?
3. What was your main goal when you first came to the Annex?
4. How do you feel you're doing towards achieving that goal? How helpful has the Annex been in that process? Can you tell me more about it?
5. How satisfied are you with the support you've gotten from the Annex?
 - a. Very unsatisfied
 - b. Somewhat unsatisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat satisfied
 - e. Very satisfied
6. Why were you (un/satisfied)?
7. Have you taken part in any of the welding or website design training courses?
 - a. If yes, how did you find that? How satisfied were you with that? (Same 5-point scale as in question 5)
 - b. How helpful was it for you in working towards your goals?
8. What's the best thing about the Annex? (Possible Prompt: What makes the Annex different from other services you've accessed?)
9. Has there been anything that you wanted help with that the Annex wasn't able to offer?
10. Do you have any suggestions for ways the Annex could improve its service?

Follow-up Interview Guide for Annex Participants

1. Are you still coming to the Annex? If yes, how often have you come here in the last 6 months? (About how many times have you been here?)
 - a. Are you working or in school? (FT/PT?)
 - b. If yes, how helpful Annex in that?
2. What was your main goal when you first came to the Annex?
3. How do you feel you're doing towards achieving that goal?
 - a. How helpful has the Annex been in that process? Can you tell me more about it?
4. How satisfied are you with the support you've gotten from the Annex?
 - a. Very unsatisfied
 - b. Somewhat unsatisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat satisfied
 - e. Very satisfied
5. Why were you (un/satisfied)?
6. If the Annex wasn't here, where would you look for support?

7. Do you have any suggestions for ways the Annex could improve its service?

Initial Partner Interview Guide

1. How are you connected to the Annex?
2. What was your impression of the Xperience Annex when you first heard about it? (possible prompt: Did you have any concerns about the Annex? If yes, what were they?)
3. Has your impression of the Annex changed at all? If yes, how?
4. How have referrals been between your organization and the Annex? (suggestions for improvement?)

For a) Youth steering committee

From your perspective, how often are youth steering committee agendas driven by youth?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Seldom
- Never

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

- Understanding among partners at the Annex Youth Steering Committee has grown since I first started attending.
- Trust among partners at the Annex Youth Steering Committee has grown since I first started attending.
- Collaboration among partners at the Annex Youth Steering Committee has grown since I first started attending.
- Youth attending the Annex Youth Steering Committee Meetings gain opportunities to network with employers by attending these meetings.

What changes (if any) have you seen in the working dynamics or relationships between partners at the Xperience Annex Youth Steering Committee?

For b) Partnership committee (larger)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

- My organization is co-funding projects with the Xperience Annex. (Agree/Undecided/Disagree)
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee has contributed to increased **collaboration on projects** among partners at the table.
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee has contributed to increased **information sharing** among partners at the table.
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee has contributed to **breaking down silos** between partners at the table
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee has contributed to increased **trust** among partners at the table.
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee has contributed to increased **transparency** among partners at the table.
- Service gaps are identified at the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee. Agree.
- Partners collaborate to fill identified service gaps at the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee table.
- An integrated model of service delivery for youth is being developed through the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee.
- **Service integration has increased** because of the work of the Xperience Annex.

What changes (if any) have you seen in the working dynamics or relationships between partners at the Xperience Annex Partnership Committee? (This can include both relationships with the Xperience Annex and between other partners.)

For c), d), and/or e) Sub-committees:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

c) Housing sub-committee

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

- Service gaps are identified at the Xperience Annex Housing sub-committee.
- Partners collaborate with each other and other experts to fill identified service gaps at the Xperience Annex Housing sub-Committee.
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Housing sub-Committee has raised awareness among partners attending of issues facing youth.
- An integrated model of service delivery for youth is being discussed through the Housing Sub-Committee.
- Service integration has increased because of the work of the Xperience Annex Housing sub-Committee.

d) Mental health sub-committee

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

- Service gaps are identified at the Xperience Annex Mental Health sub-committee.

- Partners collaborate with each other and other experts to fill identified service gaps at the Xperience Annex Mental Health sub-committee.
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Mental Health sub-committee has raised awareness among partners attending of issues facing youth.
- An integrated model of service delivery for youth is being discussed through the Mental health sub-Committee.
- Service integration has increased because of the work of the Annex Mental health sub - Committee.

E) Employment and Education sub-committee

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

- Service gaps are identified at the Xperience Annex Employment & Education sub-committee.
- Partners collaborate with each other and other experts to fill identified service gaps at the Xperience Annex Employment & Education sub-committee.
- Participation in the Xperience Annex Employment & Education sub-committee has raised awareness among partners attending of issues facing youth.
- An integrated model of service delivery for youth is being discussed through the Xperience Annex Employment & Education sub-committee.
- Service integration has increased because of the work of the Xperience Annex Employment & Education sub-committee.

5. Is there anything else about the Annex that we haven't gotten to that you'd like to share?

Annex Partner – Follow-up Interview Guide

For a) Youth steering committee

1. From your perspective, how often are youth steering committee agendas driven by youth?
 - a. Most of the time
 - b. Some of the time
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Never

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements ?

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

2. Understanding among partners at the Annex Youth Steering Committee has grown since I first started attending.
3. Trust among partners at the Annex Youth Steering Committee has grown since I first started attending.
4. Collaboration among partners at the Annex Youth Steering Committee has grown since I first started attending.
5. Youth attending the Annex Youth Steering Committee Meetings gain opportunities to network with employers by attending these meetings.
6. What changes (if any) have you seen in the working dynamics or relationships between partners at the Xperience Annex Youth Steering Committee?

For b) General Partnership

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements ?

(Strongly Agree • Agree • Undecided • Disagree • Strongly Disagree)

2. Partnership with the Xperience Annex has **raised my awareness** of issues facing youth in our community.
3. My organization is **co-funding** projects with the Xperience Annex. (Agree/Undecided/Disagree)
4. Partnership with the Xperience Annex has contributed to increased **collaboration on projects** among partners in the community.
5. Partnership with the Xperience Annex has contributed to increased **information sharing** among partners at the table.
6. Partnership with the Xperience Annex has contributed to **breaking down silos** between partners at the table.
7. Partnership with the Xperience Annex has contributed to increased **trust** among partners at the table.
8. Partnership with the Xperience Annex has contributed to increased **transparency** among partners at the table.

9. **Service gaps** are identified through the Xperience Annex Partnership.
10. Partners **collaborate** to fill identified service gaps at the Xperience Annex Partnership table.
11. An **integrated model of service delivery** for youth is being **discussed** through partnership with the Annex.
12. An **integrated model of service delivery** for youth is being **developed** through the Xperience Annex's work.
13. **Service integration has increased** because of the work of the Xperience Annex.

(If not answering questions above regarding Youth Steering Committee):

14. What changes (if any) have you seen in the working dynamics or relationships between partners connected with the Xperience Annex? (This can include both relationships with the Xperience Annex and between other partners.)
15. Besides what we've talked about, what impacts you seen come out of the Annex's work?
16. What, if anything, surprised you about the Annex and its work?
17. Do you have any concerns about the Annex or its work?
18. How does the Annex fit in the world of services for youth?

Annex Youth Engager Staff Interview Guide

1. How connected do you feel the team is overall? (Prompts: How connected do you feel to the rest of the Annex team? What are the dynamics like?)
2. Have there been any issues about the way the Annex has been working that have come up since you've been involved? How have they been raised? How has that happened?
3. How do issues or problems with the Annex typically get solved?
4. What training opportunities, if any, have you had as part of your role with the Annex?
5. What skills have you gained or strengthened through your work with the Annex?
6. How has the team increased capacity, if at all? (Prompt: Are things that have gotten easier among the staff team as the Annex has gone on?)
7. Have any of the processes you use in the Annex work changed since you've been involved? (Prompt: Any adjustments made? What were they? Why were they made?)
8. How has the engager role evolved since you've been aware of the Annex?
9. If you had a magic wand and could change anything about the Annex, what would you do?
10. Is there anything else you think I need to know as part of the evaluation that we haven't gotten a chance to talk about yet?

Navigator interview guide

1. How connected do you feel the team is overall? (Prompts: How connected do you feel to the rest of the Annex team? What are the dynamics like?)
2. Have there been any issues about the way the Annex has been working that have come up since you've been involved? How have they been raised? How has that happened?
3. How do issues or problems with the Annex typically get solved?
4. What training opportunities, if any, have you had as part of your role with the Annex?
5. a) What skills have you gained or strengthened through your work with the Annex?
5. b) How has the team increased capacity, if at all? (Prompt: Are things that have gotten easier among the staff team as the Annex has gone on?)
6. Have any of the processes you use in the Annex work changed since you've been involved? (Prompt: Any adjustments made? What were they? Why were they made?)
7. How has the engager role evolved since you've been aware of the Annex?
8. What's working well about connecting youth with service provider partners to access supports around education, employment, and volunteer opportunities?
9. What's been challenging about connecting youth with service providers to access these supports?
10. When you think about all of the people who have come to see you here as a whole, what trends have you seen in terms of basic needs being met (e.g. housing, hygiene)?

11. Are there any gaps in services that have become apparent through your work here? If so, what are they?
12. How common is retaining contact with the youth?
13. How important is retaining contact?
14. Do participants tend to come and see you less often over time? What does a typical pattern of contact look like?
15. How common is it to see improvements in mental and/or physical health in participants? How do you know?
16. In terms of overall numbers, how do you feel about the number of folks coming to see you? Has it gone up over the last year?
17. Do you ever get negative feedback? If yes, how does it reach you typically? What happens with that feedback?
18. How common is it for youth to establish a goal with you?
19. Once a goal is established, how common is it for youth to work towards the goals they've set?
20. Is there anything else you think I need to know as part of the evaluation that we haven't gotten a chance to talk about yet?

City Support Staff interview guide

1. Can you tell me about your role with the Annex? (Prompt: How did you become involved? What led to that connection? what do the supports you offer look like?)
2. How has that been going?
3. What's working well about connecting youth with service provider partners to access supports around education, employment, and volunteer opportunities?
4. What's been challenging about connecting youth with service providers to access these supports? What do you think would likely be happening to the people you see through the Annex if you weren't here?
5. What, if anything, has been challenging about working with the Annex so far?
6. When you think about all of the people who have come to see you here as a whole, what trends have you seen in terms of basic needs being met (e.g. housing, hygiene)?
7. Are there any gaps in services that have become apparent through your work here? If so, what are they?

8. What does a typical pattern of contact look like? Do participants tend to come and see you less often over time?
9. How common is it to see improvements in mental and/or physical health in participants? How do you know?
10. Overall, how do you feel about the number of folks coming to see you? Have you noticed any changes?
11. Do you ever get negative feedback? If yes, how does it reach you typically? What happens with that feedback?
12. How connected do you feel the team is overall? (Prompts: How connected do you feel to the rest of the Annex team? What are the dynamics like?)
13. Have there been any issues about the way the Annex has been working that have come up since you've been involved? How have they been raised? How has that happened?
14. How do issues or problems with the Annex typically get solved?
15. What training opportunities, if any, have you had as part of your role with the Annex?
16. What skills have you gained or strengthened through your work with the Annex?
17. How has the team increased capacity, if at all? (Prompt: Are things that have gotten easier among the staff team as the Annex has gone on?)
18. Have any of the processes you use in the Annex work changed since you've been involved? (Prompt: Any adjustments made? What were they? Why were they made?)
19. Is there anything else you think I need to know as part of the evaluation that we haven't gotten a chance to talk about yet?

Appendix C – Partner Assessments of Impacts

		Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Understanding grown	Round 1	0	0	5	55	41
	Round 2	0	0	0	66	33
Trust Grown - Youth Steering Committee	Round 1	0	0	33	33	33
	Round 2	0	5	9	64	23
Collaboration Grown	Round 1	0	5	18	55	23
	Round 2	0	0	0	66	33
Youth gain job opps at SC	Round 1	0	38	14	33	14
	Round 2	0	33	33	0	33
Co-funding projects	Round 1	0	50	0	50	0
	Round 2	0	73	7	20	0
Increased collaboration	Round 1	0	5	16	58	21
	Round 2	0	7	0	33	60
Information sharing increased	Round 1	0	11	16	50	32
	Round 2	0	0	0	47	53
Breaking down silos	Round 1	0	11	11	68	11
	Round 2	0	0	13	53	33
Trust Grown (general partnership)	Round 1	0	5	16	63	16
	Round 2	0	13	20	47	20
Transparency grown	Round 1	0	0	68	21	11
	Round 2	0	0	60	33	7
Gaps identified	Round 1	0	7	11	68	14
	Round 2	0	7	7	47	40

Partners collaborate to fill gaps	Round 1	0	15	11	56	19
	Round 2	0	0	27	40	33
Raised my awareness of issues facing youth	Round 1	0	24	0	38	38
	Round 2	0	7	7	43	43
Integrated service delivery discussed	Round 1	0	12	46	25	17
	Round 2	0	13	0	73	13
Integrated service delivery developed	Round 1	0	40	40	20	0
	Round 2	0	20	33	27	20
Service integration increased	Round 1	0	14	29	57	0
	Round 2	0	0	40	33	27

References

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